

# PHOTOGRAPHERS SPREAD THE MESSAGE HEART GALLERIES AROUND THE NATION

by Alethea Mock



Christopher. Portrait by Shana Sureck. Connecticut Heart Gallery.

What began in New Mexico in 2001 as a way to promote the adoption of children on a local scale has snowballed in the past few years. Heart Galleries have sprung up in cities around the nation from Seattle, Washington, in the Northwest to Tampa, Florida in the Southeast. Oklahoma and Connecticut have also joined the ranks of states that have hosted Heart Galleries.

The project brings together the diligent work of adoptive agencies with the creative capacities and social conscience of photographers to, in the words of Diane Granito (the Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment Coordinator for the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department), “put a face on the issue of adoption in New Mexico and elsewhere.” Not only do the Heart Galleries do that but they also, as their name suggests, create an opportunity for empathy and connection. Numerous children and youths who would normally be

very challenging to place because they are more than nine years of age or are a member of a sibling group have found homes as a direct result of these exhibitions.

The success and spread of this project has surpassed even the hopeful expectations of its founders. The inspiration for the project initially came from Ellie Ortiz while she was interviewing Granito for a position as an adoptive parent recruiter. The idea began simply enough: to enlist professional photographers to create a body of expressive photographs of children in need of adoption as a way of introducing them to prospective families. The photographs were then to be hung in a gallery for exhibition.

The response received from the community was overwhelming from the start. Many photographers were elated to have the opportunity to use their art to help children find a home. As Granito



**Desiree. Portrait by Patrick Raycraft. Connecticut Heart Gallery.**

expresses it they came in “with an open heart and an open lens.” This openness for connection created many lasting relationships between the photographers and the children. Several photographers have actually adopted the children that they photographed, while others became mentors and friends with their subjects.

Diane Granito considers one of the Heart Galleries’ greatest accomplishments to be the finding of homes for older children. Often, these youths in their mid-teens or older are shrugged aside with the justification that they are almost old enough to strike out on their own. As Granito says, it is “important to know that these children need families too; they need someone to turn to with joys, problems, when they get engaged or go to college.”

Another striking feature of the Heart Gallery and the portraits themselves is their powerful ability to move viewers. Granito related several instances where people, upon viewing one of the photographs for the first time, instinctively caught their breath as one of their hands simultaneously flew up to cover their heart. This recurrent reaction is a testament not only to the receptivity and skill of the photographers and open beauty of the children but also to the purity and meaning of the Heart Gallery project itself. ■

#### RESOURCES:

For information about hosting a Heart Gallery or about any of the children please call 1-800-432-2075.

Also you can visit the Washington Heart Gallery’s project website at [www1.dshs.wa.gov/heartgallery](http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/heartgallery).



**Left: Xavian. Portrait by Terry Dagradi. Connecticut Heart Gallery.**



**Right: Tiquan. Portrait by Walter Rabetz. Connecticut Heart Gallery.**





Tyrell. Portrait by Nick Lacey. Connecticut Heart Gallery.



William. Portrait by Michael Marsland. Connecticut Heart Gallery.



Sheena. Portrait by Maryann Ott. Connecticut Heart Gallery.



**Nicole. Portrait by Jake Wyman. Connecticut Heart Gallery.**

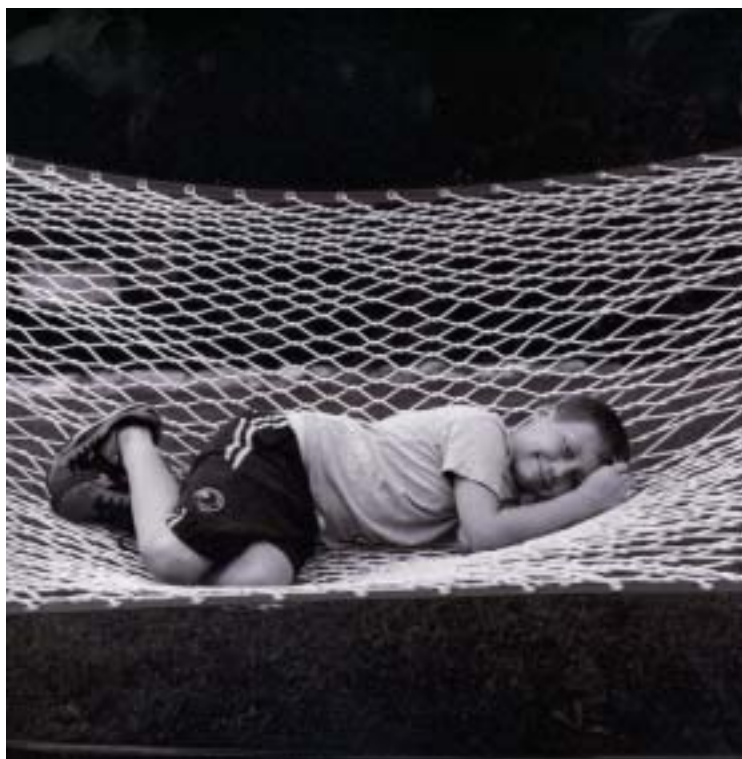


**Norma. Portrait by Sandy Hale. Connecticut Heart Gallery.**



**Keith. Portrait by Marjorie Wolfe. Connecticut Heart Gallery.**





Left: Randy. Portrait by Mara Lavitt. Connecticut Heart Gallery. Right: Dontrel. Portrait by Cris Volpe. Connecticut Heart Gallery.



Pete. Portrait by Marlo Marrero. Connecticut Heart Gallery.



**Stephanie. Portrait by Steve Laschever. Connecticut Heart Gallery.**



**Shonica. Portrait by Jeff Shaffer. Connecticut Heart Gallery.**



**Jermaine. Portrait by Mary Frey. Connecticut Heart Gallery.**



**Pascual. Portrait by Peter Wnek. Connecticut Heart Gallery.**



Top: Jachim. Portrait by Harold Shapiro. Connecticut Heart Gallery.  
Bottom, from left to right: Jayquan, Brianna and Damien. Portrait by Peter Craig. Connecticut Heart Gallery.





**Clockwise from top: Paul. Portrait by RF Wilton. Connecticut Heart Gallery; Jessica. Portrait by Edwina Stevenson. Connecticut HeartGallery; Joey. Portrait by Frank Poole. Connecticut Heart Gallery.**





**Jose. Portrait by Peter Bosco. Connecticut Heart Gallery.**



**Josh and Jacoby. Portrait by Joanne Schmaltz. Connecticut Heart Gallery.**



**Jordan. Portrait by Christine Breslin. Connecticut Heart Gallery.**



Above: Kaley, Tammy, Arthur and Tyiesha. Portrait by Colleen Walsh. Florida Heart Gallery. Left: Nicholas. Portrait by Colleen Walsh. Florida Heart Gallery.



David, Melonie, Logan, Cody, Rebekah, Cory, and Keenan. Portrait by Lisa Mauriello. Florida Heart Gallery.





Above: *Wallace Kids*. Portrait by K. Peters. Florida Heart Gallery. Left: *Williams Brothers*. Portrait by Mike Matthews. Florida Heart Gallery



*Lateshia*. Portrait by Hope's Studio. Florida Heart Gallery



Clockwise from top left: *Alex*. Portrait by Tampa Photo. Florida Heart Gallery; *Jasmine*. Portrait by Dana Lunden. Florida Heart Gallery; *Yoel*. Portrait by Jerry Nelson. Florida Heart Gallery; *Cris*. Portrait by Lisa Mauriello. Florida Heart Gallery.





Left: *Catavia*. Portrait by Ryan Prado. Florida Heart Gallery. Right: *April with trees*. Portrait by Beth Reynolds. Florida Heart Gallery.



*Shadreka, Robert and Tiffany*. Portrait by Newton's Photography. Florida Heart Gallery.



*Dan and Shartany*. Portrait by Charity Beck. Florida Heart Gallery



Clockwise from top left: *Christiana*. Portrait by Peggy Washburn. Washington Heart Gallery; *Octavia*. Portrait by Peggy Washburn. Washington Heart Gallery; *Raymond*. Portrait by Peggy Washburn. Washington Heart Gallery; *Cody*. Portrait by Peggy Washburn. Washington Heart Gallery.





Clockwise from top: *Justin*. Portrait by Peggy Washburn. Washington Heart Gallery; *Rachel*. Portrait by Phil Borges. Washington Heart Gallery. *Jonathan*. Portrait by Phil Borges. Washington Heart Gallery.